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SUBJECT: Summertime Sadness Article
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As Mother Nature concludes her vicious wrath on the world, AKA the winter season, we're finally free from the blistery cold winds, dangerously icy roads, and the forced hibernation in our homes constantly cuddling the nearest heater. After this we receive one of the greatest natural blessings I believe to exist. Summertime. The once barren trees become full of color, foliage, and life again, our gardens begin to sprout up crops for our families to happily enjoy, and we are greeted by various wildlife in our early morning commutes. Humans tend to take advantage of the change in season and take various beach trips, camping adventures, and any other excuse to remain outdoors. While most people love this time of year, me personally, I get a certain Summertime Sadness as I remain locked up.

Many apologies ahead of time for the direction this piece will be heading. I prefer to remain optimistic in my thoughts and opinions on most matters, but sometimes we just have to get some things off of our chests. And a fair warning to any reader who may feel my jealousy as I envy your summer vacation. But we all have that certain time of year where we are placed in some sort of unexplainable funk to do a past event.

Personally, summer is my all-time favorite season of the year. At any given time you can find me soaking up the sun by committing myself to various yard work duties, celebrating at any upcoming music and arts festivals, or thoroughly enjoying myself at a family cookout. If it's outside, you can count me in. I also celebrate my birthday in the month of June, (I just turned 28 this year, yikes!) which has always been my unofficial welcoming to summer. Also, since I've been incarcerated, I've had the opportunity to get married to my soul mate and best friend, which is also celebrated in June. So yet another meaningful celebration I'm forced to miss out on. To be honest, all of these usually happy events in my life, really take a toll on me whenever I can't celebrate them the way I truly wish to.

I have ambivalent feelings about spending my summers in prison. While participation in softball, and sitting on a bench outside strumming away on the guitar are rather limited enjoyable experiences, there's just way too many things that eliminate those good feelings.

For one being trapped on the housing unit is absolutely miserable to say the very least. The housing units are not equipped with any sort of central air system, or proper ventilation specifically to help alleviate the heat waves brought by the summer. Being trapped on the unit with a hundred additional men doesn't help the situation any and only makes the humid, thick air even more stale and polluted. Turning on a fan seems like a viable solution, but this only forces the already warm air to be blown and pushed into a new location. If you decide to hop in the shower just to cool off, by the time you hope out, dry yourself off, and make it back to your cell, you're already covered and dripping back in sweat. Throughout the summer I find myself constantly waking in piles of my own sweat. It's just that bad in here. Under COVID restrictions for the last year, we have been forced to remain on the unit for the vast majority of the time, with very limited recreation time. Even when the conditions are this extreme.

Another thing that really drags me down around this time of year is I'm forced into awareness that everybody's having a wonderful time in the summer air while I sit behind these walls. Don't get me wrong, I want every single person to take advantage of the beautiful weather and desirable conditions, but that doesn't mean I don't envy you. Watching beachgoers surfing and families enjoy rides at Hershey Park on the news, or hearing about my wife going on vacation only encourages me to put on a fake smile for the happiness of other, but in all reality my heart aches for missing out on the good times.

But there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

This is my final summer behind bars!

After four years, and four summers, this is the final time I'll have to miss out on blowing my candles out while my loved one wish me a happy birthday. This is the last time I'll have to settle for a measly ten minute phone call to wish my wife a happy anniversary. This is the last summer I'll experience without leading the grill cooking hamburgers and hot dogs for my friends and family members. This is the last summer I'll have to miss out on the construction of my favorite trio; chocolate, marshmallows, and graham crackers. This is my last summer in prison.

As I stare out my window and watch the sun beam off the dozens of dandelions outside my cell, only one thought remains in my mind. This is the last time I'll be seeing my favorite season from this point of view.